

# Macomb jurors may be bused to courthouse

*Program would help those who lack cars*

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Macomb County may become the first in Michigan to offer its jurors free rides to court under a plan before county leaders today.

County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh is asking county commissioners to approve a pilot program that would offer jurors free SMART bus tickets to circuit court.

The idea, she said, is to help jurors who might not have transportation to the courthouse and to perhaps ease the parking crunch in downtown Mt. Clemens.

"We might take it for granted that everyone has a car, and they don't," Sabaugh said Tuesday. "We wouldn't want to deny anyone the opportunity to serve on a jury because they don't have a ride to the courthouse."

The service might also reduce the number of people excused from jury service. Bill Froberg, one of three Macomb County jury commissioners, said lack of transportation is the No. 1 reason given when people ask to be excused.

"It's something that should have been done a long time ago," Froberg said of the service.

For county commissioners, the program's biggest selling point might be its lack of cost to taxpayers. SMART — Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation — is offering 500 free tickets for a test period

of three or four months.

If enough people take advantage, the program would continue with funding from jurors' mileage reimbursements and their voluntary donations. The projected annual cost is about \$16,430.

Jurors would be asked to donate their first day's payment of \$25. If 20 jurors used the service on an average day, only 6 of the 150 or so jurors who serve each week would need to donate to keep the program going, Sabaugh said.

Officials at SMART said they jumped at the chance to participate when Sabaugh approached them. They plan to take it to other counties if it catches on in Macomb.

"If it achieves success — which we think it will — I'll be making phone calls to clerks in Wayne County and Oakland County," said Dan Dirks, general manager of the SMART system.

SMART currently runs 12 fixed routes in Macomb County. Smaller buses north of M-59 will pick up customers from their homes by request.

The pilot program will be up for approval today before the county's Legislative and Administrative Services Committee. If it passes, it will go before the full board March 18 for final approval.

"If it's going to serve the needs of the jury pool at no expense to the county, we should absolutely look into it," Committee Chair Ed Szczepanski said.

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